

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A data processing system comprising:
memory; and
5 a pointer to a location in memory, the pointer comprising:
a block field defining a block size;
a length field defining a number of blocks in a segment of
memory;
an address pointing into the segment of memory; and
10 a finger field which denotes a block of the segment of memory
into which the address points.
2. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein the pointer to a location in memory
further includes a permission field which indicates how a process may access
data within the segment of memory.
- 15 3. A system as claimed in claim 2 wherein the pointer to a location in memory
further comprises a capability field which identifies the pointer to a location in
memory as a capability pointer having bounds and permission defined therein.
4. A system as claimed in claim 3 which bounds the segment of memory to the
number of blocks indicated by the length field, each block of size 2^B where B is
20 a value defined in the block field.
5. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein a base address is computed from the
address in the pointer to a location in memory by setting the B least significant
bits of the address equal to zero, where B is the block size, and subtracting a

block index indicated by the finger field from the base bits of the address excluding the B least significant bits.

6. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein the length field is encoded such that the number of blocks is indicated by adding a defined constant to the value in the length field for all but the smallest range of numbers and the smallest block size.
7. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein the pointer to a location in memory further includes an increment-only bit which when set causes the system to exclude negative offsets to the address in the pointer.
8. A system as claimed in claim 7 wherein the address of the pointer to a location in memory points to the base address of a memory region within the segment, all portions of the memory segment not within the memory region having addresses less than the address in the pointer to a location in memory.
9. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein the memory representation includes a block field, length field and finger field, respectively, for each of a segment of memory and a subsegment within the segment of memory.
10. A method of representing data in a data processing system comprising:
 - defining a block size in a pointer to a location in memory;
 - defining in the pointer to a location in memory a number of blocks in a segment of memory;
 - defining in the pointer to a location in memory an address pointing into the segment of memory; and
 - defining in the pointer to a location in memory a block of the segment of memory into which the address points.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10 further comprising indicating in the pointer to a location in memory how a process may access data within the segment of memory.
12. A method as claimed in claim 11 further comprising identifying within a pointer to a location in memory that the representation is a capability pointer having bounds and permission defined therein.
13. A method as claimed in claim 12 wherein the pointer to a location in memory defines a number of blocks indicated by a length field, each block of size 2^B where B is a value defined in a block field.
14. A method as claimed in claim 10 further comprising computing a base address from the address in the pointer to a location in memory by setting the B least significant bits of the address equal to zero, where B is the block size, and subtracting a block index from the base bits of the address excluding the B least significant bits.
15. A method as claimed in claim 10 further comprising determining the number of blocks defined by the memory representation by adding a defined constant to a value in a length field for all but the smallest range of numbers and smallest block size.
16. A method as claimed in claim 10 further comprising excluding negative offsets to the address in the memory representation where an increment-only bit is included in the representation.
17. A method as claimed in claim 16 wherein the address of the pointer to a location in memory points to the base address of a memory region within the segment, all

portions of the memory segment not within the memory region having addresses less than the address in the pointer to a location in memory.

18. A method as claimed in claim 10 wherein the memory representation includes a block field, length field and finger field, respectively, for each of a segment of memory and a subsegment within the segment of memory.
19. A computer program product comprising:
- a computer usable medium for storing data; and
 - a set of computer program instructions embodied on the computer usable medium, including a pointer to a location in memory, the pointer comprising:
 - a block field defining a block size;
 - a length field defining a number of blocks in a segment of memory;
 - an address pointing into the segment of memory; and
 - a finger field which denotes a block of the segment of memory into which the address points.
20. A computer program product as claimed in claim 19 wherein the pointer to a location in memory further includes a permission field which indicates how a process may access data within the segment of memory.
21. A computer program product as claimed in claim 20 wherein the pointer to a location in memory further comprises a capability field which identifies the pointer to a location in memory as a capability pointer having bounds and permission defined therein.

for each of a segment of memory and a subsegment within the segment of memory.

28. A computer data signal comprising a pointer to a location in memory, the pointer comprising:
 - 5 a block field defining a block size;
 - a length field defining a number of blocks in a segment of memory;
 - an address pointing into the segment of memory; and
 - a finger field which denotes a block of the segment of memory into which the address points.
- 10 29. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 28 wherein the pointer to a location in memory further includes a permission field which indicates how a process may access data within the segment of memory.
30. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 29 wherein the pointer to a location in memory further comprises a capability field which identifies the pointer to a
 - 15 location in memory as a capability pointer having bounds and permission defined therein.
31. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 30 which bounds the segment of memory to the number of blocks indicated by the length field, each block of size 2^B where B is a value defined in the block field.
- 20 32. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 28 wherein a base address is computed from the address in the pointer to a location in memory by setting the B least significant bits of the address equal to zero, where B is the block size, and subtracting a block index indicated by the finger field from the base bits of the address excluding the B least significant bits.

33. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 28 wherein the length field is encoded such that the number of blocks is indicated by adding a defined constant to the value in the length field for all but the smallest range of numbers and the smallest block size.
- 5 34. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 28 wherein the pointer to a location in memory further includes an increment-only bit which when set causes the system to exclude negative offsets to the address in the pointer to a location in memory.
- 10 35. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 34 wherein the address of the pointer to a location in memory points to the base address of a memory region within the segment, all portions of the memory segment not within the memory region having addresses less than the address in the pointer to a location in memory.
- 15 36. A computer data signal as claimed in claim 28 wherein the memory representation includes a block field, length field and finger field, respectively, for each of a segment of memory and a subsegment within the segment of memory.